



# Iowa General Assembly

## 2005 Committee Briefings

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/aspx/Archives/Committees/Interim/2005/Committee.aspx?id=75>

### NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Dates:** [November 21, 2005](#) | [October 6, 2005](#) | [October 4, 2005](#) | [September 27, 2005](#) | [September 26, 2005](#)

**Purpose.** *This compilation of briefings on legislative interim committee meetings and other meetings and topics of interest to the Iowa General Assembly, written by the Legal Services Division staff of the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency, describes committee activities or topics. The briefings were originally distributed in the Iowa Legislative Interim Calendar and Briefing. Official minutes, reports, and other detailed information concerning the committee or topic addressed by a briefing can be obtained from the committee's Internet page listed above, from the Iowa General Assembly's Internet page at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>, or from the agency connected with the meeting or topic described.*

### NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

November 21, 2005, Davenport

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Joe Bolkcom

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Paul McKinley

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Representative Mary Lou Freeman

**Overview.** The final meeting of the New Iowans Study Committee followed four public hearings held in Des Moines, Storm Lake, Ottumwa, and Davenport during the months of September and October.

**Discussion.** In opening Committee discussion regarding testimony received at the public hearings, the Co-chairpersons stated that Iowa welcomes immigrants and recognizes that immigrants make Iowa a strong state, that Iowa's future is tied to immigrants and immigration issues, and that the public hearings demonstrated that people providing services to immigrants have a definite passion for their work. Members of the Committee raised the issues of the inadequacies with the current federal immigration system, the existence of human trafficking activities in the state, the importance of language and communication issues, and education issues for immigrants.

**Recommendations.** The Committee made recommendations to address the general areas of human trafficking, incentives for public safety officers and medical personnel, English as a second language funding, interpreter services, a task force to address public safety concerns due to a lack of a comprehensive identification system, immigration reform, licensing of professionally trained immigrants, alternative teaching licensure for language instruction, mentoring programs for young people, and a state version of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act).

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### NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

October 6, 2005, Davenport

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Joe Bolkcom

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Paul McKinley

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Representative Mary Lou Freeman

The New Iowans Study Committee held the fourth of four public hearings in Davenport on October 6, 2005. During the public hearing, the Committee took testimony relating to all of the following topics:

- **Public Safety.** Testimony included the need for legislation to criminalize the act of human trafficking.
- **Workforce Issues.** Testimony included the need for bilingual assistance and job training for new Iowans.
- **Benefits to the State.** Testimony included the ideas that new Iowans enhance the state through increased diversity, that the new Iowans in the state lead to more federal funding for the state, and that they add to the population of the state, to the potential workforce, and to the tax base. Testimony was received that the English-only law should be repealed.
- **New Iowans Centers.** Testimony included benefits that employers receive through the work of New Iowan Centers.
- **Education.** Testimony included requests for extended funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, that it generally takes seven years for a student to attain the necessary proficiency in English, the need for passage of a state version of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), the need for the universities in the state to make available in-state tuition for students that are new Iowans, and the need for more interpreters and translators in order to keep parents properly involved.
- **Health and Human Services.** Testimony included the need for health insurance for new Iowans.
- **Financial Services Issues.** Testimony was received that three obstacles to immigrants obtaining financial services are trust, language barriers, and a lack of knowledge of financial services.
- **Federal Issues.** Testimony included the need to reduce bureaucratic barriers for new Iowans to receive resettlement assistance.

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## NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

October 4, 2005, Storm Lake

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Joe Bolkcom

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Paul McKinley

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Representative Mary Lou Freeman

The New Iowans Study Committee held the third of four public hearings in Ottumwa on October 4, 2005. During the public hearing, the Committee took testimony relating to all of the following topics:

- **Driver's Licenses.** Testimony included the requirements for obtaining a driver's license, the necessity of having a driver's license for personal and work matters, the need for interpreters at driver's license stations, and the need for a temporary or provisional driver's license for new Iowans.
- **Public Safety.** Testimony included that Ottumwa police do not engage in racial profiling, the need for interpreters at the jail, the need for police officers that reflect the demographic makeup of the community, the cessation of human trafficking, and discriminatory treatment in the jail.
- **Workforce Issues.** Testimony included the need of all employers to provide all employees with adequate benefits and the need to investigate unsafe work environments and companies that take advantage of immigrant employees.
- **New Iowans Centers.** Testimony included the services currently available to new Iowans at New Iowans Centers.
- **Education.** Testimony included the need for passage of a state version of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), the need for more Headstart programs, the need for teachers that reflect the demographic makeup of the community, the need for more English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at convenient times for new Iowans, and the need for more funding for ESL programs.
- **Health and Human Services.** Testimony included predatory landlords continue to be a problem and the need for funding to support teen programs aimed at providing educational services to reduce the rates of teen pregnancy and gang participation.
- **Federal Issues.** Testimony included the need to pressure the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Bureau to cooperate more, act quickly, and clear paperwork barriers to citizenship and the inadequate availability of visa waivers for international professionals.

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## NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

September 27, 2005, Storm Lake

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Joe Bolkcom

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Paul McKinley

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Representative Mary Lou Freeman

The New Iowans Study Committee held the second of four public hearings in Storm Lake. During the public hearing, the Committee took testimony relating to all of the following topics:

- **Driver's Licenses.** Testimony included the public safety ramifications of drivers driving without driver's licenses, the difficulties faced by new Iowans who cannot obtain a driver's license, and the impact receiving a driver's license has on obtaining motor vehicle insurance.
- **Public Safety.** Testimony included communication issues being the most important issue as the demographics of the community have changed and the need for additional funding for more language training.
- **Workforce Issues.** Testimony included the fact that professional training in other countries does not always transfer and immigrants frequently are underemployed as a result and the belief that financial assistance could be used for training in the trades.
- **New Iowan Centers.** Testimony included the services currently available to new Iowans at New Iowan Centers, the community outreach programs coordinated by the New Iowan Centers, and the fact that a migrant outreach specialist had been recently hired.
- **Education.** Testimony included the importance of after school programs for new Iowans, the heavy use of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and need for more job security for the teachers of such classes, the large number of high-level students currently in ESL classes, the fact that educated students are many times underemployed or leave the state due to documentation problems, the need for Spanish grammar classes due to the illiteracy of some immigrants in their own language, and the need for extended funding for English Language Learners (ELL) programs.
- **Health and Human Services.** Testimony included the communication and languages difficulties as ongoing issues in the health care field, the fact that the Storm Lake health care community is currently engaged in a cultural exchange with the medical community in Mexico, the importance of community outreach and cultural competency training programs, new Iowans frequently experiencing depression problems that are mostly untreated due to language barriers, dental insurance for children being an issue, and a lack of health insurance leading to new Iowans not seeking health care services.
- **Federal Issues.** Testimony included that documentation issues continually arise and that reform of federal immigration laws is needed.

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## NEW IOWANS STUDY COMMITTEE

September 26, 2005, Des Moines

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Joe Bolkcom

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Senator Paul McKinley

**Temporary Co-chairperson:** Representative Mary Lou Freeman

The New Iowans Study Committee held the first of four public hearings at East High School in Des Moines. During the public hearing, the Committee took testimony relating to all of the following topics:

- **Driver's Licenses.** Testimony included the requirements for receiving a driver's license, the impact receiving a driver's license has on obtaining motor vehicle insurance, the public safety ramifications of drivers driving without driver's licenses, and the difficulties faced by new Iowans who cannot obtain a driver's license.
- **Public Safety.** Testimony included the difficulties experienced by police departments in recruiting and retaining multilingual public safety officers and the need for laws prohibiting the human trafficking of immigrants.
- **Workforce Issues.** Testimony included negative new Iowan experiences for an employer located in Marshalltown, services and benefits provided by one employer in Des Moines that employs a significant number of new Iowans, and the exploitation of undocumented workers by employers.

- **New Iowan Centers.** Testimony included services available through New Iowan Centers and need for additional funding for New Iowan Centers.
- **Education.** Testimony included the difficulties new Iowans face in trying to obtain higher education degrees, the need for investment in new Iowan children so that they can become an asset to the state in the future, and the need for more multilingual teachers in schools.
- **Health and Human Services.** Testimony included recommendations related to the accessibility and cost of health care services and related to the language barriers that exist in health care services.
- **Federal Issues.** Testimony included requests that legislators encourage changes in federal immigration law, particularly in terms of simplifying the documentation procedures.

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